

# Trailing the Moonshiners of Hawaii

BY EDWARD P. IRWIN.

ONE of the most difficult tasks of government is to persuade the average man that those set in authority over him have any right to tell him what he shall or shall not do so long as his conduct does not injure or interfere with the rights of others of his kind. Civilized men recognize easily enough the justice of the dicta, "Thou shalt not kill," and "Thou shalt not steal," but when it comes to the law, "Thou shalt not make intoxicating liquor, except by the consent of and under the regulations of Uncle Samuel," their attitude is as a general rule less receptive. Most men obey because it is the law and they are lawabiding, but they can't see the sense in it all. If a man has a bushel of corn and wants to turn it into whisky, it is often hard for him to understand why he should not be allowed to do so, especially when he intends to consume the liquor himself and not to sell it to his neighbors.

As a rule, however, people in old communities have become accustomed to accepting the dictates of government without much questioning; they obey as a matter of habit and think little of it. But it is different in new communities and in places touched comparatively rarely by the fingers of constituted authority. Men who are not used to looking every day upon uniformed representatives of government are obliged to be to a certain extent a law unto themselves, and consequently object more or less vigorously when some one wearing the badge of authority comes along and says "thou shalt," and "thou shalt not."

That is why the work of the internal revenue men, especially in out-of-the-way places like the mountainous districts of Kentucky and Tennessee and in localities but newly come under the authority of the Government of the United States, such as the Territory of

owners of which succeeded in making their escape, or whose names could not be learned. Often when the exact location of an illicit still is known, it is impossible to catch the distiller. It might seem an easy matter for the revenue men to make a quick dash and capture both still and distiller. But it isn't. Quick as they may be, the maker of illicit liquor is often quicker, for he usually has friends on the lookout to warn him, and he knows the country he is in. Not infrequently he not only succeeds in getting away himself, but also in hiding his apparatus, so that the officers have their work for nothing. More than once Collector Walter F. Drake and his deputies, and perhaps the marshal or his deputies, have lain out all night in the rain, waiting for daylight to come so they could descend upon some man who, they knew, was making okolehao, only to have the dismal morning light disclose an empty nest.

## The Last Big Raid.

The last big internal revenue raid in Hawaii, and one of the most successful, was that near town in Nuuanu Valley more than a year and a half ago.

As in many such cases, the revenue offices had suspected for a long time that there was a plant somewhere in that locality, but they waited patiently for conditions to be ripe before making a raid. Reports were made to Collector Drake at intervals, but still he waited, for he was determined that his descent on the distillers should be successful.

Then one day a report was brought in to him which turned waiting into sudden action. It was raining that day, raining hard, but rain is only a minor discomfort, and it rather increased the chances of success. United States District Attorney Breckons and Marshal Hendry were communicated with, and they were ready promptly. A big automobile charged up to the walkiki door of the capitol and the government men piled in and went rapidly up the valley to the place where it had been reported okolehao was being made.

The raid was a complete surprise, not only the plant but the illicit distillers being captured. The making of liquor



THE MAN BEHIND THE GUN.

Walter F. Drake, Collector of Internal Revenue.

were fished out before an attempt was made to sell the liquor.

The one gallon, however, was enough, and the revenue men officially seized the schooner in the name of the United States, and later the court declared her contraband. The case was fought up to the court of final appeal, but the government won out all along, and in the end the vessel was sold and the proceeds of the sale turned over to the

anese were making okolehao in a little gulch up toward the head of Manoa Valley. Making his preparations carefully, he, with deputy collectors Ralph Johnstone and Walter Doyle and Inspector Harding, who happened to be here from the Coast, started out to raid the still. They made a sudden descent on the place, and Johnstone by quick work got a firm grip on one Japanese just as the latter sprang to his feet and started to run.

Meantime, the other Japanese were breaking all marathon records down the gulch, and Johnstone wanted to get in on the chase. So he whipped a pair of handcuffs out of his pocket and tried to snap them on the wrists of his prisoner. But they wouldn't stay on; no sooner did the lock click than the Japanese was free again. Another attempt and in investigation disclosed the fact that the prisoner had no hands. The handcuffs simply slipped off over the stumps at the end of his wrists. The deputy collector decided to stay and hold his prisoner.

However, the other distillers were captured by the rest of the raiding force. F. Fujima, the handless moonshiner, is still in jail.

## Chained to a Tree.

Last year, starting at midnight in a driving rain, Collector Drake and his men started for Wahiawa, arriving there just as daylight was struggling with the rain and mist. They were on the track of a maker of illicit booze. Leaving their conveyance, they tramped rapidly up a gulch toward a still that they had been informed was being operated by some Japanese. Drake kept to the top of the ridge where he could see what went on below, while his companions followed the gulch. The latter arrived at the still just as the Japanese were cleaning up after a very successful night's work. There were two of the distillers. One, happening to look up, saw Drake outlined against the sky, and without stopping to warn his comrade, scuttled down the gulch as fast as he could go.

Springing down into the gulch, the Collector caught the second man, and not wanting to be obliged to stay and hold him, handcuffed him to a tree by one arm, which was necessarily stretched above his head to reach the nearest available limb. The Japanese thought he was going to be hung up there and left, and he squealed lustily. Drake, however, left him and started after the other man. Before long he encountered a cabin, and entering, found two Japanese, rubbing their eyes and apparently just awakened to the toils of the day. One was in the act of putting a shirt on over his head. But Drake noticed

that lying on the floor by the bed were a pair of muddy shoes and a pair of trousers the bottoms of which were wet. He gathered the man in, and later the Japanese was sent to keep time with his comrade on the reef.

## Net Sometimes Empty.

These are some of the successful raids that have been made. But it often happens that a long night of waiting in the mud under a rainy sky is productive of nothing but bad colds and aching limbs.

A curious thing about the work, says the Collector, is that often the most carefully laid plans go awry, while a raid made without much expectation of success results in the capture of both still and distillers.

Often a suspected plant is watched for months before conditions are such that there is any prospect of success. And even then it not infrequently happens that in some unknown way advance information is given and the revenue men on their arrival find nothing but traces of where a still has been.

## Japanese Frequent Offenders.

The most persistent violators of the internal revenue law in Hawaii nowadays are Japanese. In the old days it was not uncommon for some of the Hawaiians to make a little okolehao occasionally, generally for home consumption. They invariably made their liquor from ti root. But this industry, like so many others, has latterly fallen mostly into the hands of the enterprising sons of Nippon. And as has happened in more legitimate branches of industry, the product has deteriorated. Instead of going to the trouble of going out into the mountains and digging ti root, which is a good deal like work, they resort generally to the use of rice, potatoes or pineapple, mixed with sugar, the fermentation being started by the use of hops or some other artificial fermenting agent.

## Sell, but Don't Drink.

It is worthy of note, too, that the Japanese rarely drink themselves what they distill. They make it to sell to the Hawaiians out of whose hands they have taken the manufacture. They themselves prefer sake or some other milder drink. On such occasions as they do consume their own okolehao, they generally weaken it by adding water.

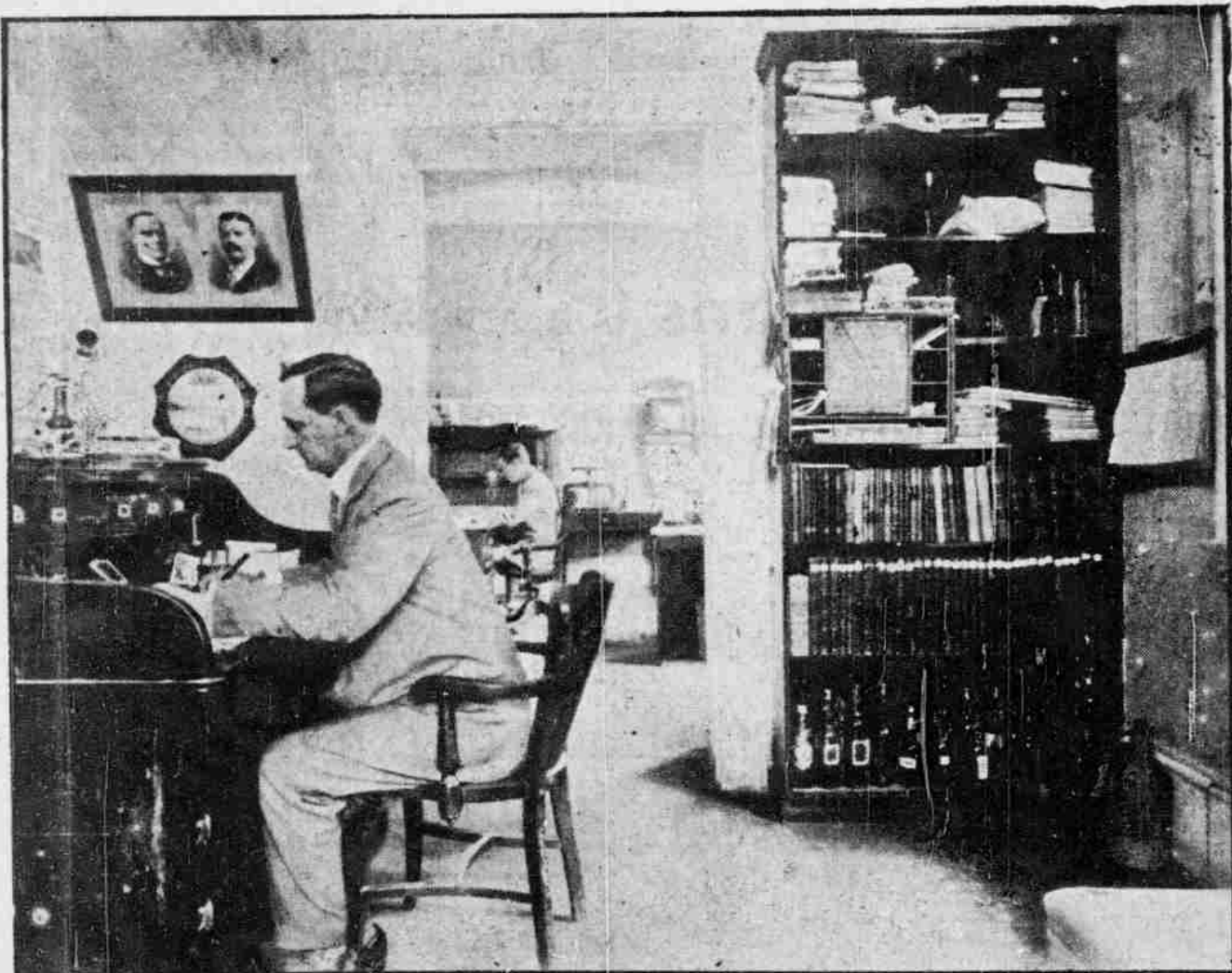
The prickly pear that is so common a pest throughout the islands is frequently used in the manufacture of present day okolehao. In fact, almost anything that will ferment serves the thirsty Japanese who is out to defy the government of the country he lives in. And no matter what he makes his concoction of, he has little difficulty in selling it.

## Swipes a Native Product.

Where the Hawaiian nowadays does engage in the work of making intoxicating liquor in violation of the law, he generally confines himself to swipes, which is a brew, not a distillation. Swipes properly made is not such a deadly drink—but usually it is not properly made. Bran, grain or potatoes form the base, but it often happens that more harmful things are added. Sometimes a plug of tobacco is nailed to the bottom of the brew tub, to give the swipes a kick. Swipes of this character is deadly in its effects, often making the user insane for the time being and being responsible for many of the crimes that are committed in Hawaii.

## Seldom Fight Back.

It is but rarely that raiding internal revenue men meet with any serious opposition on the part of the distillers. Occasionally a Japanese will put up some sort of a fight in his efforts to escape, but there have never been any casualties in Hawaii. It is different in other localities in the United States where the revenue people have to keep their eyes open. The records of the internal revenue department show that during the past ten years four persons have been killed in revenue raids, and seven wounded. No less than 6661 arrests have been made for violations of the internal revenue laws, while 9766 illicit stills have been seized and destroyed. One thousand one hundred and thirty stills were seized last year. It cost the government no less than \$98,826.60 for the year ended June 30, 1908, for looking up stills and for special work in detecting violations of the in-



COLLECTOR WALTER F. DRAKE AND DEPUTY COLLECTOR RALPH JOHNSTONE AT THEIR DESKS IN THE INTERNAL REVENUE OFFICE.

Hawaii, is not the easiest in the world. The mountaineer wants to turn his corn into moonshine; the dweller in the outside districts of Hawaii thinks, sometimes, that the government has not right to tell him that he shall not go out into the hills and gather a bushel or so of ti root and distill okolehao from it. It is part of the duty of the internal revenue men to see to it that the laws against illicit distilling are not violated, or if they are, they (the violators) are caught and punished for having ignored the law.

The situation in Hawaii is peculiarly difficult as regards the enforcement of the internal revenue laws and regulations. If a man is determined to defy the law, there are so many places to which he can retire and carry on his operations with comparatively little danger of detection. Rice, ti-root and sugar are easily to be obtained; there are hundreds of secluded gulches in which a simple still may be set up; a barrel or a soy tub serve very well to make the mash in. And in many of the outside districts the presence of a stranger is so rare that it is quickly reported, the news being passed from mouth to mouth, so that the attempt of a revenue official to locate a still loses at once the almost essential element of secrecy.

The situation is complicated by the complexity of the population of Hawaii. Japanese, Hawaiians and Portuguese are all among those who have been caught at the illicit work by the revenue men and punished for their defiance of law.

## Many Convictions Obtained.

For, notwithstanding the difficulties of the work, there have been many convictions in the United States court since the annexation of the islands extended to Hawaii the internal revenue laws. Since the establishment of the local internal revenue office, in 1906, there have been sixty-five prosecutions under the revenue laws, the convictions including Hawaiians, Japanese, Chinese and Portuguese. Some of those prosecuted were caught right in the city; others were captured in out-of-the-way and often almost inaccessible places in the mountains. In addition, there have been destroyed between twenty and twenty-five stills the

very being conducted on a big scale, and the very improbable location of the plant on the grounds of a well known residence along the most traveled road on the island increased the safety of the work. When the officers broke in to the outbuilding where the still was located, they found the most complete and effective apparatus they had ever come across. It had been operated on such a scale that there was no less than 150 gallons of liquor on hand ready for sale. Hashimoto and Kogo, the two Japanese who were the enterprising proprietors of the infant industry, were caught, not only with the goods but in the act of making the goods, and were later given heavy sentences by Judge Dole.

The liquor was being made from rice and sugar, and large quantities of these commodities were found on the premises. In addition to capturing the still and the liquor, the officers took also the cows of the dairy that was run on the premises, together with wagons and horses. These were later sold at public auction by the marshal, in accordance with the United States law which declares contraband all property found on premises where liquor is made illegally.

## Confiscated a Schooner.

Along the line of the confiscation of property employed either directly or indirectly in operations in violation of the internal revenue laws, the most famous case, not only in Hawaii but in the United States, was the seizure and sale some years ago of the schooner Kawahani.

The Kawahani was plying between Honolulu and the other side of the island. The internal revenue people had long suspected that she was engaged in illicitly made liquor, but they waited their opportunity before interfering. Then one day when the schooner dropped into Honolulu, she was boarded by officers of the internal revenue department and a thorough search instituted. It was rewarded by the finding of a single demijohn containing about a gallon of very poor okolehao. This, however, was probably the remainder of a larger amount which had already been disposed of. An amusing feature of the affair was that the okolehao had a cockroach in it, which, of course, would render it worthless—unless the bug

federal authorities. That incident was enough to make common carriers more cautious, and now on the island vessels one finds posted prohibiting the officers from allowing any contraband liquor to be carried.

## Nothing to Handcuff.

Somewhat less than two years ago Collector Walter F. Drake received information to the effect that some Japanese



THE EVIDENCE ROOM

Stills and illicit liquor captured by the local revenue men in their raids on the moonshiners of Hawaii.



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